

Social media (as software) has transformed our existence of *being-in-the-world*, or *Dasein* (Heidegger 2009, pg. 156). Since the early 2000s, apps like Facebook, Tinder and Twitter have significantly altered how we communicate with each other and our environment. Both Heidegger's model of Enframing and McLuhan's Tetrad show this transformation, which operate together to illustrate social media's social, cultural, and historical impact on our daily existence.

Everything's a resource for consumption.

Heidegger's concept of Enframing (*Gestell*) is present throughout social media, which he calls the "*gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man... to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve*" (1977, pg. 20).

Heidegger argues that modern technology flattens everything in existence into a resource for us to consume. We only treat things on the surface rather than paying attention to the uniqueness of everything. Instead, we don't see someone on Instagram as a potential friend but as a number in a database. In social media, for instance, the likes on a Facebook post, retweets on Twitter or matches on



Tinder are all commodities we consume in our *Dasein*. This flattening of resources is also present in Eyal's (2014, online) hook model through the trigger, "*the actuator of behavior — the spark plug in the engine.*" This trigger makes us seek a drive, whether social, psychological, or biological, into an internal trigger, namely "*I want to be popular on Facebook*", with the external trigger being to post on Facebook to get followers. Because of this, Enframing makes us view our quantified selves as tools for optimisation and efficiency, as "*intrinsically meaningless resources standing by for optimization*" (Thomson 2005, pg. 45). As Heidegger (1977, pg. 4) outlines, "*[t]he essence of technology is by no means anything technological*", emphasising how social media makes us optimise ourselves as much as possible, severely impacting our *Dasein* (Heidegger 2009, pg. 156).

"You're a standing reserve. We're all standing reserves!"

Furthermore, Enframing reshapes how we define ourselves and treat others within *Dasein*. We start to see others as this resource for consumption, a standing reserve that "*designates nothing less than the way in which everything presences that is wrought upon by the challenging revealing*" (Heidegger, 1977, pg. 17). We treat ourselves like a brand trying to obtain more likes and followers, optimising our profiles to be the best version of ourselves as possible. Social media reinforces this by sending notifications whenever someone likes your post or when you match up on Tinder. Most dating apps will send messages asking for more information about you, like your phone number, job title, and location, for better matchmaking, with progress bars indicating how much data you've provided. These apps even send notifications telling you when you can start matching again, further reinforcing the idea of optimising yourself. Enframing encourages this notion and frames a particular set of criteria for us on what we should consider good and bad, what should make us feel shameful and guilty. Heidegger (1966, pg. 44-46) argues that "*language speaks us rather than we speak language*" and that language constructs our *Dasein*. We start internalising social media and inadvertently become servo mechanisms of technology, where "*all attempts to reckon*



existing reality... in terms of decline and loss... fate, catastrophe, and destruction are merely technological behaviour" (Heidegger 1977, pg. 48). In summary, we've become reduced to this way of calculative thinking, where we only focus on social media and can't think outside of the language it creates in our daily existence. But, as Heidegger once feared, modern technologies, such as social media, prove that "calculative thinking may someday come to be accepted and practiced as the only way of thinking" (1966, pg. 56).

Hooked on Enframing

Enframing can be further inspected through Eyal's hook model, a concept "*designed to connect the user's problem to a solution frequently enough to form a habit*" (2014, online). The investment makes users return after receiving their reward, for instance, becoming popular on Facebook. Social media enforces the investment by creating new external triggers (ibid.), like targeted advertisements for getting more followers or achievements for your ongoing commitments, with examples including streaks on Snapchat and 'Top Fan Badges' on Facebook groups. Even dating apps like Badoo will give achievements when you make 50 right swipes as a sense of accomplishment. This creates a cycle where the investment leads to new triggers, which "*increases the odds that the user will make another pass through the hook cycle in the future*" (ibid.). Investments keep us stuck in a vortex where the more we try, the harder it becomes to escape. This is because users won't be willing to give up their commitments to social media, given how much time they've invested into it, demonstrating how social media has significantly reshaped our *Dasein* and *being-in-the-world* (Heidegger 2009, pg. 156).

I'm the Policeman Now

Another important aspect concerning Enframing is surveillance, which Lyon (2003, pg. 1) describes as "*seldom a personal hailing... a one-off event [but something] continuous, general, routine, systematic, impersonal, and ubiquitous.*" Typically, we're watched by an authoritative force, like the police or government, which operates through examination where you're "*chimed and chided into being "normal" instead of abnormal, delinquent, or deviant*" (Van Nuenen 2016, pg. 513). This is reminiscent of the Medieval period, where public executions were used as surveillance through the power of punishment. But, as Foucault (2008, 48-49) explains, public executions weren't "*so much to re-establish a balance as to bring into play, as its extreme point, the dissymmetry between the subject who has dared to violate the law and the all-powerful sovereign who displays his strength.*" This normalisation links back to the idea of being the most normalised, optimised version of yourself as possible. However, within the last century, social media has caused us to shift towards sousveillance, "*a form of [reflectionism]... for a philosophy and procedures of using technology to mirror and confront bureaucratic organizations*" (Mann, Nolan, and Wellman 2003, pg. 333). Sousveillance lets us exhibit ourselves and invisibly gaze at others, where we report people if we notice offensive/insensitive behaviour. Apps like Facebook and Snapchat have become more dependent on others reporting content rather than an



authoritative force watching from above. That's not to say authoritative action isn't still used, such as when Twitter banned Donald Trump following the 2021 Capitol Riots (Twitter 2021). As a result, sousveillance affects our *Dasein* by encouraging us to watch over ourselves and our community, creating social control through self-governing and feeling watched internally over our behaviour.

McLuhan's Tetrad & *Dasein*

Another vital theory embedded within social media is McLuhan's Tetrad (1977, pg. 173), which "*describes the operation, not only of media, but of all human processes, artifacts, and creations.*" This tetrad has four different properties that emphasise "*four more or less simultaneous consequences*" (ibid.), enhancements, reversals, obsolesces and retrievals, which can all be analysed on their impact towards social media and their effects on our *Dasein*.

"I'm obsessed with my Facebook feed."

Firstly, social media enhances the use of auto-amputation. This McLuhan (2001, pg. 47) theory "*brings about a new intensity of the action by its amplification of a separate or isolated function... [as] [s]uch amplification is bearable by the nervous system only through numbness or blocking of [senses].*" In short, auto-amputation focuses on a single sense (like sight) while numbing the others (like sound) when engaging with social media. This explains why we've become obsessed with constantly checking our Facebook feed and Tinder matches without thinking about anything else in our *Dasein*, like talking to someone in person or hanging out with friends. Because of this, social media has altered our *Dasein* through the enhancement of auto-amputation. As McLuhan (ibid. pg. 50) states, "*[t]o behold, use or perceive any extension of ourselves in technological form is necessarily to embrace it.*"



The ugly side of social media

Secondly, social media reverses auto-amputation through anti-social behaviour. McLuhan notes how hot media "*extends one single sense in "high definition"* (2001, pg. 24). If something overheats, it's reversed into its opposing form when pushed to its limits (ibid.). Because auto-amputation "*brings about a new intensity of the action...through numbness or blocking of [senses]*" (ibid. pg. 47), all our other senses are numbed to focus on a particular sense (aka. sight), creating this anti-social behaviour in our *Dasein*. Such behaviour was seen on Tony the Tiger's Twitter account. In late 2014, the furry community sent countless sexual



messages, images and requests for intercourse to the account of the children's cereal mascot (Feinberg 2015; Hern 2016), displaying extremely inappropriate and anti-social behaviour in our daily existence. This behaviour also links back to Enframing, where '*language speaks us rather than we speak language*' (Heidegger 1966: 44-46) because social media enforces this way of thinking

that we can't escape. Furthermore, 4chan is notorious for its users' anti-social behaviour, spreading onto other social platforms and our daily existence. For example, users posted inappropriate jokes and images on screens at the Agile business conference in 2013 (Arin Go 2019; Sudjono 2020). Additionally, hoax advertisements promoting fake features were made for iPhones, like bendable features (Parrack, 2014) and waterproof capabilities (Gibbs, 2013), causing people to destroy their actual devices in their *Dasein*. These instances of anti-social behaviour display how "*[t]he social order, social norms, social conscience and accountability of behavior that exist in the real world become uncertain and frail on the Internet*" (Huang, Deng, 2008). As a result, this anti-social behaviour highlights the negative impact of social media on our *Dasein*.

A Not-So-Happy Birthday

Thirdly, social media obsoletes rituals, such as birthday parties, get-togethers, and physical conversations. Social media makes individual expressions like meeting face-to-face or hanging out with friends feel strange to conduct in our daily existence, especially given how influential social media has been in how we communicate, particularly within the last decade. A notable example of this is birthday messages through Facebook or Snapchat, which have reshaped how we engage with something as traditional in our culture as celebrating birthdays. What used to be this festive moment we embraced with friends and family in public spaces

has transformed into a simple message we send on social media. We may add photos or emojis to show our connection to the person, but it doesn't have the same impact as seeing them face-to-face and being able to celebrate their birthday with them. This also links to Enframing and how social media has made us see others as resources to consume, where we don't always mean the birthday messages we send. The other person may even be aware of this, but sending birthday messages like this on social media has become necessary in our



modern society to be the most optimised self we can be. Additionally, it also links back to anti-social behaviour and how "*[t]he social order, social norms, social conscience and accountability of behavior that exist in the real world become uncertain and frail on the Internet*" (Huang, Deng, 2008). As social media obsoletes rituals like birthdays, we see that "*social activities... and the overall social fabric have been unavoidably influenced...where cultural traditions have been slowly fading away*" (ibid.), significantly affecting our *Dasein*.

Finding your fellow tribesmen

Lastly, social media retrieves tribalism, this caste system of finding those similar to you. Social media isn't about being open to differences and other cultures; it's about finding your tribe and becoming part of an eco-chamber. This retrieval emphasises how social media has made "*people determine their reactions and attitudes toward others according to such social nuances*" (Strauss, cited by Huang and Deng 1993), which reshapes how we experience *Dasein* in the modern world. This also links back to auto-amputation (McLuhan 2001, pg. 47), which was based on the Greek god Narcissus, and his obsession with his reflection, dying after looking at it for so long. Specifically, the origin of Echo, the goddess deprived of speech, except for repeating the last words of another (Käll, 2015), therefore



being influenced by other people's cultures. We fail to expose ourselves to other people and their cultures because we're so used to this language that social media has created for us. We can't think beyond that, recalling Heidegger's idea that '*language speaks us rather than we speak language*', constructing our daily existence (1966, 44-46). Social media has enforced this notion that we only hang out with people we agree with, whether in interests or personal views, linking to the idea of finding your fellow tribesmen who understand you culturally. As a result, this emphasises how social media dramatically impacts our *Dasein*, as we tend to group with similar people rather than expand beyond those boundaries we've set for ourselves.

Summarising Social Media's Impact on *Dasein*

In conclusion, social media has transformed how we interact with *Dasein* (Heidegger 2009, pg. 156). Heidegger's Enframing shows how social media flattens everything into resources for consumption, transforming ourselves and others into commodities for optimisation. Additionally, its implementations with sousveillance alter how we monitor others and ourselves on social media and in *Dasein*. Additionally, McLuhan's Tetrad further displays social media's impact on our existence with its four phases. These concepts help to demonstrate how social media has socially, culturally, and historically transformed our *being-in-the-world* (ibid.).

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